**University of Alberta**

# Attitudes towards teaching physical education: A female perspective

**by**

**David William Chorney**

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Education

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The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research for acceptance, a thesis entitled **Attitudes Towards Teaching Physical Education: A Female Perspective** submitted by David William Chorney in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Education.

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## Abstract

The purpose of this study was to investigate a female subject sample only, to determine if female physical educators perceive predetermined characteristics of successful teaching in physical education differently than a mixed gender group. The participants ranked, in an order from most important to least important, 25 statements describing qualities or competencies required of a physical education teacher.

Data were collected from female physical educators from the Edmonton Public Schools in Edmonton, Alberta, Canada. All instructors taught at the grade levels of 7 to12 and were similar in their educational background, as all candidates possessed an education degree with a teaching major or minor in the area of physical education. The total sample was (n=96), from which 71 responded.

This study attempted to answer three specific questions: 1) How do female physical educators rank 25 predetermined characteristics of successful physical education instruction? 2) How does the rank order of predetermined characteristics from a female subject sample differ from previous research using a mixed sample? 3) Which characteristics are considered most and least important to female physical education instructors?

Based on the findings of this study, gender and age do not appear to play a significant role in the effective instruction of physical education. Additionally, teacher experience and the attitudes possessed by female physical educators do not appear to change significantly over the course of a career. Interestingly, many of

the same characteristics that are considered most and least important by American physical educators of both genders are strikingly similar to the responses by the Canadian female subject sample.

**Acknowledgments**

This thesis is the culmination of two very challenging, yet rewarding years of dedication and sacrifice. Through the lessons that were taught to me over the years by my loving parents, who also sacrificed in so many ways during my upbringing, I would like to dedicate this completed work to my heroes, Bill and Marilyn Chorney.

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Finally, I would like to say that for every person who undertakes such a venture as this, there is a circle of family, friends and fellow professionals who, in their own way, give their support and encouragement. My genuine gratitude goes out to all of those who were part of my life prior to, during, and especially now that this current journey has ended.

I have learned to be a reflective individual who appreciates the rewards of hard work and sacrifice. Goals and achievements are more truly enjoyable when shared with loved ones and all stakeholders during the journey, thanks to everyone who believed in me, you know who you are!

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# Chapter 1 INTRODUCTION

## Researcher's Perceptions of all Stakeholders Involved in Physical Education

Although a great deal is known about the health benefits of regular physical activity and quality physical education instruction, much less is known about physical educators' attitudes toward teaching physical education. The literature has suggested that physical educators are concerned with maintaining an active, well-disciplined classroom, with lower expectations of students in terms of knowledge and skill retention (Matanin & Tannehill, 1994). It also appears that teachers are not as concerned about student motivation to participate in physical education classes (Smyth, 1995).

The attitudes, values, and perceptions of teachers combine to form a belief system that is unique to every physical educator. Individual teachers have different belief systems regarding the relative importance of various goals for physical education. These varied belief systems influence teachers' curricular and instructional decisions and, ultimately, student learning. Teachers' attitudes and values toward teaching compose educational value orientations. Value orientations are characterized by the importance of critical components of the teaching-learning process to the teacher (Ennis & Zhu, 1991). The particular school context also influences teachers' attitudes and instructional behaviors. Thus, the nature of the context and the nature of teachers' attitudes and beliefs related to physical education affect the implementation of a curriculum and student learning (Ennis, 1996).

From a review of the literature, it is evident that most of the studies on teacher attitudes have focussed on males or both genders in researching teachers' attitudes towards physical education. Only one study in this review of the literature has addressed the concerns of females and their struggle to achieve higher promotional positions in physical education (Bloot & Browne, 1996). My interest has been heightened as to whether or not middle school or secondary school female physical educators have the same attitudes toward the subject of physical education as their male counterparts do.

The term *attitude* has often been used interchangeably with other words such as *perceptions* and *beliefs* in much of the reviewed literature (Arrighi & Young, 1987; Byra, 1991; Ennis, 1995). For the purposes of this thesis, I will define the term attitude as a behavior representative of feeling or conviction. Another way of defining the term can be "a disposition that is primarily grounded in affect and emotion and is expressive of opinions rather than belief " (Guralnik, 1979, p. 40). The term perception implies a realistic awareness of the elements of environment through physical sensation, and a belief is more of a state of mind in which trust, confidence, or reliance is placed in some animate or inanimate object.

Limited documentation exists on teachers' attitudes toward physical education and even less regarding female attitudes towards the subject. Research has tended to target specific characteristics such as teachers' perceptions on effective teaching, planning, student participation, and assessment in the physical education setting.

## Purpose of the Study

This study was similar in nature to one that was conducted by Dr. Linda Edwards from the University of Utah in 1983. Her study was designed to examine the differences in the perceived importance of 25 predetermined characteristics of successful physical educators among five specific groups of people representing both genders and who were at various stages of their education and teaching careers.

The purpose of my study was to investigate a female only subject sample to determine whether female physical educators perceive predetermined characteristics of successful teaching in physical education differently than a mixed gender group does. The participants ranked, in order from most important to least important, 25 statements describing qualities or competencies required of a physical education teacher. The statements were determined to be representative of five subscales denoting general behaviors or qualities necessary for a successful physical educator (Appendix A).

To date, I have found minimal research from Canada that has focused on teachers' attitudes towards physical education, and no studies have been conducted which focus strictly on the female subject sample.

## Research Questions

This study will attempt to answer these specific questions:

1. How do female physical educators rank 25 predetermined characteristics of successful physical education instruction?

2. How does the rank order of predetermined characteristics from a female subject sample differ from previous research using a mixed sample?

3. Which characteristics are considered most and least important to female physical education instructors?

## Delimitations

This study was delimited to:

(a) Female teachers who taught primarily physical education in Grades 7 to 12 in Edmonton Public Schools,

(b) The 1999/2000 school year, and

(c) The 25 characteristics selected for ranking.

## Limitations

This study was limited by:

(a) The use of 25 items in a rank-order technique,

(b) The participants' exposure to factors other than education and teaching experience which may have affected their perceptions; and

(c) Teachers' completion of this task at a particular point in time with respect to years of experience, the start of the school year, and the time of day that the teachers completed the task.

## Assumptions

The following assumptions were made:

1. The teachers would respond to the instrument with honesty and accuracy.

2. All teachers who received the instrument by mail would carefully read and properly follow the directions of the instrument.

3. The teachers who took survey packages for colleagues absent from the meetings that the researcher had set up to discuss his research, would actually explain how the rank ordering of the characteristics should be done.

4. The teachers participating in the study would have had university training in physical education instruction and experience in teaching physical education.

# Chapter 2 REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

The following literature review provides an overview of the various facets associated with successful teaching, both in a general respect and specifically in regards to teaching physical education. The attitudes of female teachers, students, and physical educators are also discussed. Finally, a section discussing the teacher preparation programs currently in place will be discussed with specific implications for the educating of future physical educators.

## Attitudes of Females towards Teaching

Teaching has, in the past, been predominately a career for women, and it will likely remain so for the foreseeable future (Megyeri, 1996). According to Mathis (1987), teaching is not seen as a powerful and prestigious occupation. It is more frequently viewed as an occupation of last resort and one particularly suited for women raising their own children while working.

Olsen & Maple (1993) have found that job commitment is sometimes lower among women, primarily due to their internal conflict between domestic and professional roles. Fifty percent of the female educators who participated in a research study by Olsen & Maple (1993), reported that their personal commitments affect or sometimes interfere with their professional responsibilities, while only 40 % of the males who responded felt the same way.

Currently, females outnumber males at the elementary level by almost 5 to 1 while the ratio of females to males at the secondary level is more parallel (Mathis,

1987). Over the past few decades the percentage of male teachers in North America has been slowly and steadily declining. In 1988, males made up 24% of the total teaching population and in approximately 10 years that percentage has decreased to 21% (Beadle, 1994).

In terms of intrinsic satisfaction, females tend to be more satisfied with teaching than their male counterparts (Grambs, 1987). Females derive great enjoyment from teaching through a variety of ways: sense of autonomy, opportunities to use skills and abilities, opportunities for continued learning, and to have significant impact on others. These factors, which heighten female intrinsic motivation for teaching, are all ranked higher in comparison to the results of how male teachers perceive their profession (Olsen & Maple, 1993). These results were similar to the research conducted by Grambs (1987), which found that older female teachers are more satisfied with teaching than younger ones, and older women are extremely loyal employees, more so than male educators of all ages. The reason that older female teachers were found to be extremely loyal could, in part, be a result of the fact that their children have grown up and their need to be a parent at home would no longer be a relevant issue. Claesson & Brice (1989) found that younger teachers, who were also mothers of school aged children, often had difficulties dealing with the boundaries between their professional duties and responsibilities and their compassion as mothers when faced with conflicts in the school environment.

Much of the literature on the attitudes of females towards teaching is similar. The point can be made that the relation between the school and the family is

fundamentally a relation between mothers and the school and in the case where these mothers are also teachers, a definite conflict exists between the separate roles of educator and primary care giver. There is little doubt that most females are generally more caring and nurturing than their male counterparts and openly state this fact, however, despite outnumbering males by a wide ratio in terms of sheer numbers of teachers in the field, many females feel that they must outperform males in the teaching profession in order to obtain the same level of status and recognition (Olsen & Maple, 1993).

## Characteristics of Successful Teachers

One way of examining teachers' attitudes is to study their perceptions of success and nonsuccess in teaching. Research has indicated that teachers' perceptions of successful and unsuccessful teaching develop early in life (Lortie, 1975). According to Byra (1991), teacher attitudes and perceptions are developed prior to their entering formal professional training. This should be of concern to teacher educators because what a prospective teacher believes and thinks about teaching success and nonsuccess may affect the extent to which that teacher will be influenced by a teacher-preparation program. Lawson (1986) hypothesized that a preservice education program has the greatest impact on future teachers when the perceptions of the future teachers match the perceptions of the teacher educators.

Teachers' perceptions of effectiveness and feelings of success provide the basis for teacher beliefs, and ultimately, teacher action. Additional evidence reveals a

connection between what teachers think and how they behave in a teaching situation (Fenstermacher, 1978). Recent research is discovering that teacher beliefs can definitely influence the learning process of students, and since the humanistic attitudes in teachers are becoming noticeably predominant among researchers of successful teachers, teacher education programs and the respective colleges and universities which offer these courses, may need to examine whether, and in what ways, they impact on teacher belief systems (Agne, Greenwood, & Miller, 1994).

Successful teachers are very proficient and adept at using the first days of school to establish and rehearse routines, which permit instruction to proceed fluidly and efficiently (Evertson & Weade, 1989; Lynn, 1994). Studies of the beginning of the school year have noted the significance of the first few days in establishing rules and norms and in setting the tone for the entire year (Leinhardt, Weidman, & Hammond, 1987; Evertson & Weade, 1989).

Characteristics of successful teachers tend to be divided into three broad classifications which likewise characterize superior performance: motivation, cognitive skills, and interpersonal skills (Klemp, 1977). In addition, successful teachers share the special quality of possessing above average motivational characteristics, capable of setting goals for their students that are worthy and attainable. Devoted teachers work hard with their learners, both in and out of the classroom, in an attempt to create learners who are productive and reflective. Their expectations are high, but positive, and they expect all of their students' work to be taken seriously (Ferguson, 1987; Agne, Greenwood, & Miller, 1994).

Teachers who possess a wide variety of instructional strategies exhibit evidence of well-developed cognitive skills. These varied cognitive skills allow the educator to challenge students when responding to questions and force the learner to become a critical and reflective practitioner (Evertson & Weade, 1989; Ferguson, 1987).

A final quality that separates the "good" teacher from the "excellent" teacher is interpersonal skill used for establishing rapport with students. Teachers who are friendly and honest are perceived to be trust-worthy and caring. Those teachers who believe in a humanistic approach to education possess specific qualities such as acceptance, friendship, flexibility and non-moralistic attitudes. They define a teacher's belief system whose fundamental orientation may again be characterized as caring (Greenwood & Miller, 1994; Ferguson, 1987).

By advantage of birth and upbringing, some people seem to possess more qualities, which make for excellence in teaching. But effective teachers do not just happen. Excellent teachers have always worked and continue to work systematically to acquire and perfect the skills that make them successful.

## Characteristics of Successful Physical Educators

While it is important that students enjoy and are interested in the activities that are structured for them, learning, not entertainment, is the goal of physical education (Pease & Anderson, 1994). A primary indicator for teacher success in physical education instruction is the degree of success reported by the students (Arrighi & Young, 1987). Most teachers deemed such factors as positive feedback, positive

attitude, and improved skill performance by the students most important when compared to any other variable (Arrighi & Young, 1987). Teaching effectiveness, however, seems to focus on teacher activities and characteristics. This is in contrast to feelings of success where student behaviors and actions are the most important (Arrighi & Young, 1987).

Parker (1995) found that student achievement is the primary indicator of teacher effectiveness. She also concluded that teachers did not see the tasks of management and control serious issues in their teaching routine. This is in contrast to the findings by Arrighi and Young (1987), Byra (1991), Placek (1983), and Pease & Anderson (1994) who indicated that teachers' management behaviors were very important to effective teaching. The key to this discrepancy may lie in the amount of teaching experience of the participants. Many studies have focused primarily upon preservice or novice teachers. Arrighi and Young (1987), and Beveridge and Gangstead (1986) included experienced teachers with a minimum of 5 years of teaching experience. In Parker's (1995) study, the teachers were all veterans who had been teaching for an average of 19 years and may have progressed past the stage when control is one of their central and conscious concerns. They may function within higher stages of teaching expertise where they have automatized routines for class management that assure reasonable control.

Established teachers with a minimum of 5 years' teaching experience in physical education seem to believe that being firm, fair, and enthusiastic; maintaining discipline; and developing the self-concept of students are the key factors for ensuring success in

their physical education classes (Beveridge & Gangstead, 1986). These results are strikingly similar to Placek's (1983) findings that teachers strive to keep students busy, happy, and good. It seems that experienced teachers continue to have concerns about their teaching and maintaining discipline and class control throughout their entire teaching careers, but the problem of encouraging unmotivated students to participate represents a more serious challenge that may far outweigh any of their concerns in teaching physical education today.

According to O'Sullivan and Dyson (1994), teachers believe that it is necessary to reduce instructional demands in order to gain and maintain the cooperation of their students. Many feel that they had decreased their expectations of students over the years because students were becoming more challenging and less willing to engage intensively with their subject matter. The result is that low expectations are placed on students by their teachers in terms of skill development, intensity of effort over a sustained period of time, or their understanding of the significance of physical activity in their own lives.

According to Behets (1997) and Graham (1987), the effective physical education teacher creates more practice time to enhance learning by reducing management and instruction time. The primary role of the physical educator, therefore, seems to be providing pupils with sufficient opportunity to practice. This belief may be simply stated as physical education is 'learning by doing'.

Like other subject specialists, physical education teachers have the most success when they plan and organize lessons to establish a productive learning environment that

minimizes opportunities for disruptive student behaviour (Lynn, 1994). Careful lesson planning enables the physical educators to estimate how much time tasks will require and then decide how transition between tasks should be handled. Additionally, careful planning enables teachers to anticipate perceived areas of student difficulty. Teachers with good plans not only reach their objectives, but are also more likely to succeed in maintaining the flow of lessons.

Another important facet of successful physical education instruction is the ability of teachers to provide variations of the tasks they are teaching. This is accomplished by introducing entirely new tasks, modifying the current task, or simply interrupting the activity to accentuate a learning cue or provide group feedback (Behets, 1997; Pease & Anderson, 1994). When teachers use variation, students usually stay interested in the task; therefore reprimands or punishment may not be necessary.

Successful physical education teachers continually move around the outside of the activity area and are aware of students' behavior at all times (Lynn, 1994; Hastie & Saunders, 1990; Behets, 1997; Pease & Anderson, 1994). Teachers who are good class managers are successful not because they handle disruptive students differently, but because they effectively plan to prevent disruptive behavior from occurring (Rink, 1985; Lynn, 1994).

Another quality of a successful physical educator is the ability to deal with student misbehavior calmly and quickly without disrupting the flow of the lesson. This aspect of the profession can be minimized by establishing clear signals to begin and end activities (Lynn, 1994). Teachers should be certain to outline their expectations

regarding how to begin and end class to maximize the use of all time that is available. Students must be made aware that equipment should be chosen quickly and when use of the equipment is complete, it should be returned as neatly as it was found. If students do not follow equipment procedures, both safety issues and monetary concerns may arise. Careless injuries can occur and valuable equipment may be lost or misplaced.

Researchers, such as Pease & Anderson (1994), Lynn (1994), Behets (1997), and Hastie & Saunders (1990), agree that proper planning before the class session, constantly assessing the students throughout the class period, possessing the flexibility to adjust activities accordingly, and taking time afterward to reflect on the session with the intent to be more effective during the next session, are all crucial skills for not only successful physical education teachers, but teachers of all other subject areas as well.

## Students' Influence on Teachers' Attitudes

Physical education teachers must be cognizant of students' needs and interests in physical education classes. Motivating youth is an integral part of the learning process. According to Ennis (1995), many teachers are unwilling to accept responsibility for analyzing their teaching practices or curriculum, and refuse to change the content of the course to make it more meaningful to students. Teachers who become frustrated with students who reject the curriculum or display disruptive behaviors often use inappropriate methods of dealing with the students. Rather than initiate changes to their curriculum and program policies, teachers use punitive means to penalize students who do not conform to their perceived ideals (Ennis & Cothran, 1997). When students'

needs are not considered and their voices are not heard, physical education, like many other school subjects, is quickly perceived as irrelevant because there are no opportunities to influence the learning environment or content to suit the interests of the learners. Teachers' awareness of their learners must improve if effective teaching and meaningful learning is to occur. For some students, physical education is perceived as very challenging, whereas others perceive it as a considerable threat to their self-esteem (Mitchell & Chandler, 1993). If these negative perceptions are not addressed early in an adolescent's life, it is very difficult to alter these perceptions as the student matures. Perceptions of control vary considerably in that some children believe that they are able to exert a measure of control over outcomes, whereas others see themselves as unable to do so. Students who perceive an environment that is challenging and nonthreatening, and in which they have some control over the outcomes, are more likely to be well motivated to participate. Students who perceive an environment as competitive rarely feel motivated to participate and may, at times, regress in their desire to put forth a genuine effort (Mitchell & Chandler, 1993). It is important for teachers to recognize and understand the factors related to students' perceptions of their learning environment.

Perceived task-involved climates are associated with measures of intrinsic motivation and the belief that effort leads to achievement (Duda, 1996; Mitchell & Chandler, 1993; Solmon, 1996). The extensive literature on intrinsic motivation indicated that long-term engagement in activities is more likely when the impetus to become involved is internal rather than external (Frederick & Ryan, 1995). It is

reasonable to assume that when students do not initially engage in physical activities, improve their skills, or feel competent; they are less likely to continue participation in physical education classes. Simply put, students are more motivated in activities they find enjoyable and at which they are successful.

Mitchell and Chandler (1993) suggested that teachers believe that students' skill acquisition is the most important characteristic for teachers of physical education. This is in contrast to the findings of Matanin and Tannehill, (1994), Ennis, (1995), and Smyth, (1995), who concluded that teachers believe that keeping students active is more important than any other characteristic. Knowledge acquisition and assessing student progress were also considered by teachers to be more important than skill teaching and acquisition. Whatever the priorities are of the numerous physical educators working today, it could be argued that unless teachers believe that it is important to enhance motivation and use strategies to foster student motivation in physical education, any gains which are hoped to be secured during high school physical education classes will be lost in the future due to lack of participation. Furthermore, by encouraging students to develop positive self-perceptions and adopt a task orientation, teachers can instill motivation in students that is based on the pleasure of performance and the belief that tasks can be successfully accomplished. In this way motivation will be intrinsically rather than extrinsically based, thereby increasing the probability of an active lifestyle throughout the learner's life.

Physical education instructors must change many traditional forms of instruction and planning if students are to become interested and self-motivated learners. They

must provide ample practice experiences for students so that successes are obtained. The teachers, however, must continually challenge their students by providing more difficult tasks, because student interest will deteriorate if success becomes too easy. Teachers must encourage attributions to effort and make students feel confident by striving for success. Dweck (1975) indicated that, when confronted with failure, students who were encouraged to attribute outcomes to effort showed more positive motivation than did students who were given only successful experiences. Teachers, therefore, can enhance motivation by encouraging students to evaluate outcomes in terms of the amount of effort applied. Teachers should also place more emphasis on processes or performances of activity than on products or outcomes of activity. A final strategy for enhancing student motivation is teaching goal setting in physical education (Mitchell & Chandler, 1993). Physical education teachers are in an ideal situation to provide students with short-term and long-term goals that are realistic, challenging, and specific; to assist students in setting their own goals; and to provide feedback relating to goal accomplishment. Used effectively, goal setting provides a valuable means by which teachers can motivate students and instill commitment to participation in physical education.

Teachers who have difficulty accepting the responsibility of unmotivated and noncompliant students must reflect and alter their attitudes to create a more learner-friendly environment, one that promotes a curriculum that is sensitive to variation in physical education students' goals, beliefs, values, and degrees of interest (Duda, 1996). The physical education teacher must allow for self-actualization to occur through a

flexible physical education program. As Howard (1969) claimed, "New curricula must have some reasonable relevance to reality as perceived by the student" (p. 328).

I believe that if egoistic climates are going to continue to be created by physical educators, then the goal of creating motivated students in physical education will probably never be achieved. If students perceive that they lack the ability to succeed, they will find little or no reason to exert effort. When students perceive an ego-involved orientation as salient in their classes, they tend to focus on ability rather than effort and are more likely to evaluate their ability in a negative manner (Solmon, 1996). Teachers must allow some student input into their learning if long-term attitudinal changes are to occur towards the benefits of physical education. Without a change in teacher's beliefs and attitudes, negative practices will be perpetuated from class to class over many years.

**Professional Teacher Preparation Programs in Physical Education**

The background experiences influencing students who are enrolled in education colleges with a teaching interest in the area of physical education are many and varied. However, most of these students share a background in the world of sports and athletics. They have also been enculturated as students, in physical education; however, many of them did not encounter physical education in elementary schools under the leadership of trained specialists (Hoffman & Rink, 1984).

The teachers-coaches encountered by preservice teachers while they were still in high school may also have conveyed the cultural contradictions that exist in society

(Spindler, 1972). The rhetoric and ideals of varying individual differences, self development, and individual autonomy are contradicted by the apparent obsession with conformity, discipline, and control, that is manifested in school programs of physical education and athletics.

Many physical education majors are not accurate in their perception of the abilities, attitudes, and values of the non-athletic pupils in schools. Their perception is affected by the particular subculture of their background experiences. It is of paramount importance that teacher educators have more accurate perceptions of non-athletic pupils than do their undergraduate students (Hoffman & Rink, 1984).

Through research studies conducted by Locke (1984), it was found that many inservice teachers of physical education do not plan lessons in advance, adapt lessons to the needs of individual students, provide positive reinforcement for learning, provide adequate opportunity for practice of skills, hold students accountable for execution of practice tasks, or maintain a warm and positive social atmosphere in class. Since approximately 1300 institutions in North America have programs that specialize in teacher preparation, it is easy to understand how students may differ in their philosophies of teaching physical education when there are thousands of instructors with varying beliefs and value systems 'educating' these students each year.

However, despite churning out thousands of physical education teachers every year across North America, there are studies, which have found similar results regarding where additional emphasis should be spent on educating preservice teachers. Studies of preservice and inservice physical education teachers' decision-making processes (Bell,

Barrett & Allison, 1985; Housner & Griffey, 1985) support the notion that preservice teachers attend more to classroom management and focus their attention on ensuring children are busy, happy, and well behaved.

Several physical education researchers have agreed that more attention should be given to studying the nature of, and the processes involved in, developing personal conceptions of teaching. Many believe these factors strongly influence both teaching and learning activities (Dodds, 1989 & Graber, 1989).

According to McBride (1984), the preparation of physical education teachers remains technical and skill-oriented rather than scholarly and theoretical. These findings are similar to those of Book, Byers, and Freeman (1983), who found student teachers to not be concerned about their pupils' achievement and concluded that student teachers perceived teaching as an extended form of parenting, about which there is little to learn other than through instincts and own experiences as a child in the network.

McBride (1984) supports the idea of physical education faculties and colleges of education implementing a more selective admissions policy in the next decades to improve the quality of candidates who are interested in being professional teachers in the area of physical education.

If the selective process is more strictly governed, then the quality of students entering the program will likely be more motivated and receptive to learning various practices associated with successful teaching in physical education. In addition, these preservice teachers must be educated in the concept of reflection so they may learn how to study their own teaching effectiveness and act upon their personal observations.

Although a chosen group of preservice teachers who are selected to enter programs for educating new physical educators may benefit school aged pupils in the future, instructors in the teacher preparation programs still require a longer period of time in which to formulate various ideologies in the minds of their undergraduates (O'Sullivan & Tsangaridou, 1992). Teacher education programs can educate their teachers to have student learning as a primary goal, but this is something that does not happen in one course or with one faculty member. Such training takes time and needs to be repeated at various junctures within the student's program (Ross, 1990).

# Chapter 3 METHODOLOGY

## Survey Research

Survey research is the most frequently encountered type of self-report research (Gay, 1987). The collection of information usually involves one or more data-gathering techniques such as structured or semistructured interviews, questionnaires, and attitude scales (Cohen & Manion, 1994; Engelhart, 1972; Gall, Borg, & Gall, 1996). "Surveys gather data at a particular point in time with the intention of describing the nature of existing conditions" (Cohen & Manion, p. 83). Surveys concerned with the current status of construct variables, such as attitudes, require care in the selection or development of the data-gathering instrument (Gay, 1987). In all reputable survey research some preliminary conditions must exist. The first of these specifications is to state the exact purpose of the enquiry. Another prerequisite for survey research is a description of the population, which is to be researched. Cohen and Manion, along with Engelhart, suggested that the planning stage of survey research must include the populations to be sampled, the methods of summarizing and organizing the data, and the techniques appropriate for interpreting the data. Gay (1987) also described survey research as an attempt to collect data from members of a population in order to determine the current status of that population with respect to one or more variables. Shipman (1985) advocated the use of survey research as a legitimate research methodology and denounced the claim that survey research is concerned only with generalization.

In conducting survey research, the researcher infers information about a population of interest based on the responses of a sample drawn from that population. A representative sample is one whose characteristics pertinent to the purposes of the research do not differ from the characteristics of the population from which the sample is drawn and about which generalizations are made based on the data supplied by the sample (West, 1991).

Survey research of high quality never ignores the problem of nonresponse. Proceeding into data analysis and reporting in the absence of evidence for representativeness of survey returns discredit the investigator. According to West (1991), it is vital to characterize nonrespondents, with the hope of showing that they do not differ significantly from respondents in material respects. The purpose of doing so is not merely to increase the number of respondents and, therefore, the response rate, but rather to validate whether representativeness may be assumed even with less than a very high rate of response (West, 1991). Authorities on research in education (Kerlinger, 1973) asserted that a percentage of response at least in the mid 80s and preferably in the 90s requires no further action and permits the assumption of representativeness and, in turn, of credible findings.

As mentioned previously, one of the data-gathering techniques in survey research is an interview. The research interview has been defined as a two-person conversation initiated by the interviewer for the specific purpose of obtaining research-relevant information. Interviews can range from the formal, structured interview in which set questions are asked and the answers recorded on a standardized schedule to

less formal, semistructured interviews in which the interviewer is free to modify the sequence of questions or change the wording. A completely informal, unstructured interview can also occur, where the interviewer may have a number of key issues that he/she raises in conversational style instead of having a set questionnaire (Cohen & Manion, 1994).

A second data-gathering technique is the questionnaire. Questionnaires may be the most used and misused data collection instruments in educational research (Galfo, 1983). Gall, et al. (1996) defined *questionnaires* as "documents that ask the same questions of all individuals in the sample" (p. 289). It is very important for the person developing the research instrument to make the intent and mode of the response clear, because there is little possibility that the respondent will attempt to obtain clarification of ambiguous points from the researcher circulating the instrument if the researcher is unavailable (Galfo, 1983).

My purpose for using survey research was to collect data from female physical education teachers in Edmonton Public Schools about their attitudes and perceptions of teaching physical education to students in Grades 7 to 12. I was interested in finding out how females perceived teaching physical education, because relatively little research can be found on this topic for this target population. Specifically, questions pertaining to their personal, professional, instructional, human-relations, and classroom-management styles were asked.

# Chapter 4 PROCEDURES

The procedures used in this study are described in terms of a) selection of subjects, b) instrument used, c) data collection procedures.

## Selection of Subjects

This study collected data from female physical education instructors from Edmonton Public Schools in Edmonton, Alberta, Canada. It was the researcher's intent to focus on the perceptions of female physical educators who taught at the grade levels of 7 to 12. This group would also be comparable in their educational background, because all potential candidates would have completed an education degree with a teaching major or minor in the area of physical education. The total sample was 96, of which 71 responded to the questionnaire.

After permission was granted by the Ethics Review Committee from the Department of Secondary Education, University of Alberta, the researcher contacted the Cooperative Activities Coordinator from Edmonton Public Schools to gain permission to do research within Edmonton Public Schools of Edmonton, Alberta, Canada. The researcher then contacted the consultant for physical education of Edmonton Public Schools to acquire the names of potential candidates and the schools in which they were employed.

## Instrument

The Physical Education Role Perception Instrument (PERPI), developed by Edwards (1983), was utilized for data collection in this study. The instrument contains 25 statements about characteristics associated with successful teaching. Edwards established reliability according to the test-retest method. In addition, the scale is broken down into five subscales which represent the general classification of behaviors or qualities necessary of successful physical education teachers: personal character, professional attributes, instructional qualities, human relations, and class management (Appendix A).

The PERPI format mandates the use of a rank-ordering technique among the 25 successful teaching characteristics. The technique allows for distinctions to be made among closely related characteristics by forcing the respondents to actually order the characteristics in importance rather than allowing them the freedom to select all characteristics as equally important. The data-collection instrument was a firm piece of colored 8 ½" by 11" sheet of paper. A sheet of thinner paper, without the perforations can be found at the end of this thesis (Appendix D). Each of the 25 statements is on a perforated 1¼" square. This allows the subjects to easily separate the statements and then to reorder the statements continually until they are satisfied with their rankings. The statement rankings could then be recorded on a separate sheet along with necessary demographic subject data (Appendix B).

## Data-Collection Procedures

Beginning in the fall of 1999, the researcher, in collaboration with the physical education consultant from Edmonton Public Schools, was granted permission to attend physical education meetings throughout various districts in the city of Edmonton to make presentations regarding his research and to disseminate survey packages to the female physical educators that were present. As a result of attending four district meetings, 35% of the proposed 96 packages were given directly to females who were potential candidates for the survey sample. Over a 3-week period the researcher called and then visited the remaining female physical educators who had not yet received the survey packages. Due to time constraints, 16 packages had to be mailed to teachers so that all teachers who were candidates for the study could have time to complete the survey and return it by the end of October 1999. Seventy-one out of 96 female physical educators responded to the survey, which resulted in a 74% response rate. By statistical standards, this response rate is considered to be very high, and the results of this study can be considered representative of all female physical educators in Edmonton Public Schools.

All teachers were personally called by the researcher and given specific instructions on what to do in order to partake in the survey. All survey packages contained a cover letter outlining the research focus and reasons for carrying out the study. In addition, a consent form (Appendix C) was included and required to be completed. A sheet outlining the procedure on how to separate and organize the cards with the various characteristics was included (Appendix D), along with a sheet to

transfer the lettered characteristics and information about the teacher's age and years of experience (Appendix B). The researcher included in all packages a self-addressed stamped envelope to avoid any inconvenience to the participants when they mailed back the consent form and data-collection sheet.

# Chapter 5 DATA ANALYSES

This chapter has been organized to facilitate discussion of the data in relation to the author's previously stated research questions for this study. The data gathered in this study were analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences, 1999 version 9.0, and a 200 MHz Pentium II computer at the University of Alberta in Edmonton, Alberta, Canada. The following sections are included: (a) a description of participants, (b) a ranking of characteristics by teachers, (c) a discussion of which characteristics are considered most and least important to female physical education instructors, (d) a comparison of Alberta study to previous research in Oklahoma, and (e) a discussion of the results.

## Description of Participants

The total number of participants who responded to the survey was 71 out of 96 or a 74% response rate. For the purposes of this study, the researcher recoded the age of the subjects to separate them into four distinct categories (Table 1). The participants were asked to check the appropriate box that represented the range of age that applied to them. The various categories were represented by 1 for ages 21 to 25, 2 for ages 26 to 35, 3 for ages 36 to 45, and 4 for ages 46 and over.

Teaching experience was also a variable in this study, and the participants were asked to select one of five categories that represented their current status (Table 2). The various categories were first year of experience, 2 to 5, 6 to 10, 11 to 20, and 21 and over. Because there were no respondents in the category of first-year teacher, the

researcher combined the first two categories into one. The total number of participants in each category was quite similar. There were 22 teachers who had teaching experience between 2 and 5 years, 19 teachers with between 6 and 10 years of experience, 20 teachers with 11 to 20 years of experience, and 10 teachers with 21 years of experience or more. Table 5-1 and Table 5-2 shows the results in terms of frequency and percent for age and experience variables. Table 5-3 shows the descriptive statistics for the characteristics that were ranked by the subjects of the study. The two highest ranked characteristics were X, "provides a positive learning environment," and A, "exhibits enthusiasm." The two lowest ranked characteristics were J, "attends professional meetings, workshops, etc.," and G, "maintains a positive relationship with faculty and staff ".

**Table 5-1**
**Age of participants**

| *Age of participants* | *Frequency* | *Percent* |
|---|---|---|
| Age 21-25 | 2 | 2.8% |
| Age 26-35 | 35 | 49.3% |
| Age 36-45 | 24 | 33.8% |
| Age 46 and over | 10 | 14.1% |
| Totals | 71 | 100% |

**Table 5-2**

**Teaching experience**

| *Teaching experience* | *Frequency* | *Percent* |
|---|---|---|
| 2-5 years | 22 | 31% |
| 6-10 years | 19 | 26.8% |
| 11-20 years | 20 | 28.2% |
| 21 years or more | 10 | 14.1% |
| Total | 71 | 100% |

The correlation between the age variable and the teaching experience variable was significant (R=. 7, p <. 01), which indicates a strong relationship between the two. Therefore, the researcher used only teaching experience to conduct a one-way analyses of variance on the 25 variables that were to be ranked.

**Table 5-3**

**Ranking of Characteristics by Teachers**

| *Characteristics* | *Code* | *Mean (x)* | *Standard Deviation* |
|---|---|---|---|
| Exhibits enthusiasm | A | 6.9 | 4.9 |
| Democratic environment | B | 19.8 | 4.6 |
| Sense of humour | C | 11.9 | 6.7 |
| Good relationship with children | D | 9.2 | 5.8 |
| Dedicated to teaching phys. ed. | E | 8.8 | 6.9 |
| Knowledge of physical education | F | 13.6 | 7.6 |
| Positive relationship with staff | G | 20.9 | 3.8 |
| Professional demeanor | H | 15.3 | 6.9 |
| Develops students physical skills | I | 11.8 | 5.7 |
| Attends professional meetings | J | 21.9 | 3.2 |
| Adapts to change | K | 14.8 | 5.1 |
| Organizes effectively | L | 12.2 | 5.8 |
| Variety of teaching strategies | M | 11.7 | 5.8 |
| Valid testing techniques | N | 19.1 | 5.1 |
| Uses student ideas | O | 17.3 | 5.2 |
| Provides positive reinforcement | P | 8.5 | 4.7 |
| Sensitive to others | Q | 13.1 | 5.2 |
| Communicates to parents | R | 19.4 | 3.9 |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Builds rapport with students | S | 9.1 | 5.1 |
| Help develop student self-awareness | T | 8.7 | 6.1 |
| Maintains class discipline | U | 9.9 | 5.5 |
| Firm and fair to students | V | 8.7 | 5.1 |
| Concern for safety | W | 8.4 | 5.2 |
| Positive learning environment | X | 5.2 | 4.8 |
| Efficiently handles nonteaching activities | Y | 18.5 | 5.7 |

The researcher hypothesized that there would be some significant differences between how less-experienced teachers ranked the 25 characteristics and how their more experienced colleagues ranked them. A series of ANOVA analyses was conducted to investigate the potential differences between groups of teachers with different teaching experience. Given that 25 separate analyses were conducted, the level of significance was set at $\alpha = .01$ in order to reduce the type I error. Out of 25 variables, only variable H, "exhibits professional demeanor," resulted in significant differences among the various groups of teaching experience ($F=4.125$, $df=3$, $p<.01$). The post hoc test showed that a group of teachers with 2 to 5 years of experience ranked the variable H differently from the group with 11 to 20 years of experience. The mean ranking for the teachers with 2 to 5 years of experience was 11.45; and for the teachers with 11 to 20 years of experience it was 18.30.

Even though variable H showed a significant difference between the two groups, the difference was marginal. Given that 25 analyses were conducted, the outcome of

the H variable analyses should be interpreted with caution due to the possibility of committing a type 1 error. It is a valid assumption that the teachers in the study were a homogeneous group in terms of ranking all the variables.

**Sample Bias Check**

A sample bias check was conducted to see if there were any significant differences between the group of respondents and the group of nonrespondents. It was conducted by comparing the group of respondents who answered the survey promptly with the group who responded after a follow-up call was made by the researcher. After inspection of the means and standard of deviations for all variables of interest, no significant difference between the two groups was found. Therefore, the follow-up group was no different in their responses to the survey after a follow–up call was made. It is reasonable to assume that all nonrespondents were similar to the group which did respond. Therefore, the generalization of results can be made to all female physical education teachers from Edmonton Public Schools.

## Which Characteristics Are Considered Most and Least Important?

The 25 characteristics associated with successful physical education instruction were all coded with a value of 1.00 and 2.00. If any of the variables appeared in the top five selections of any respondent's ranking, that variable was given a value of 1.00. If a characteristic was chosen in the 21$^{st}$ to the 25$^{th}$ position, it was given a value of 2.00. The researcher was primarily concerned with discovering which characteristics were

ranked with the highest priority and which characteristics received the lowest priority. The 15 characteristics which were ranked most often between positions 6 and 20 are still considered important to the overall success of any physical educator, but for the purposes of this study and this specific population, these characteristics were not the highest or lowest ranked of the entire 25. Based on the fact that the women represented in this study were of different ages, years of experience, and areas of the city of Edmonton, Alberta, it is reasonable to assume that this group is representative of all female physical educators because the population was homogeneous in nature.

Those variables chosen as most important by the 71 respondents in this survey were as follows: **Characteristic X, "Provides a positive learning environment."** This characteristic was chosen by **67.6% (48)** of the respondents as one of the five most important characteristics. Only one respondent ranked it in one of the bottom five positions. It is reasonable to assume that providing a positive learning environment is of paramount importance to the female physical educators who participated in this study.

**Characteristic A, "Exhibits enthusiasm."** This characteristic was chosen by **46.5% (33)** of the respondents as one of the five most important characteristics. This characteristic was the second most popular top-five choice, which would lead one to conclude that being an energetic educator and attempting to continually stimulate the learners in a physical education environment is very important to female physical educators.

**Characteristic E, "Shows dedication to teaching physical education."** This characteristic was chosen by **43.7% (31)** of the respondents as one of the five most important characteristics. Although this characteristic ranked highly out of the 25 total characteristics, only 4.2% (3) of the respondents chose characteristic E as a very low priority. This may be a result of these teachers having taught the subject for a very long time, or perhaps the subject of physical education may have been only one of several courses that the teacher was currently teaching.

**Characteristic T, "Helps students build self-awareness and positive self-concept."** This characteristic was also deemed very important by **38%** of the teachers who chose it as a top-five characteristic. Like the other highly ranked characteristics, there were very few respondents who chose this characteristic as a low priority, with only 5 of 71 respondents ranking it in the 21$^{st}$ to the 25$^{th}$ position.

**Characteristic W, "Demonstrates a concern for students' safety."** This was the final top-five choice, with **35.2%** of the female teachers choosing this characteristic as being very important. Only one female ranked this characteristic as one of their bottom five choices out of the possible 25 characteristics that were to be ranked.

Those variables chosen as least important on the continuum from highest ranked to lowest ranked were as follows:

**Characteristic J, "Attends professional meetings and workshops."** This characteristic was chosen by **76.1% (54)** of the respondents as a bottom-five choice among all the characteristics. Perhaps even more interesting was the fact that not one female chose this characteristic as one of her top five choices.

**Characteristic G, "Maintains a positive relationship with faculty and staff."** This characteristic was chosen by **62% (44)** of the teachers as a bottom-five choice among the characteristics. Like the preceding characteristic, not one individual in the study selected this statement in the top five of their ranking of all 25 characteristics.

**Characteristic N, "Utilizes valid testing techniques based on identified objectives."** This characteristic was ranked by **52.1% (37)** of the teachers as a low priority and ranked in the bottom five choices. Interestingly, only one female selected this characteristic in the top-five of their personal ranking.

**Characteristic B, "Establishes a democratic, nonauthoritarian environment."** This characteristic was chosen by **50.7% (36)** of the respondents as a bottom-five choice. It was the fourth lowest ranked characteristic. Like the other lower ranked characteristics, this variable was not chosen by a single respondent as an important characteristic that was worthy of a top-five ranking.

**Characteristic Y, "Efficiently handles nonteaching activities, such as roll taking, game preparation, etc."** This characteristic was the final bottom-five choice, with **47.9% (34)** of all the female physical education teachers selecting this characteristic in positions 21 to 25 overall. Interestingly, this point is proven even stronger by the fact that only one female chose this characteristic in the top five of her highest-ranked characteristics.

**Comparison of Alberta Study to Prior Research in Oklahoma**

The term *established teachers* in Edwards' (1983) study refers to those professionals employed full-time with five or more years of teaching experience in physical education (n=28). In the Alberta study, the respondents all had at least two years' experience (n=71). After comparing the mean scores for the groups of teachers with different levels of experience on the ranking of the 25 characteristics, it was discovered that the teachers with different levels of experience ranked only one variable differently. Characteristic H, "exhibits professional demeanor," resulted in significant difference between the group with 2 to 5 years of teaching experience (n=22, F=4.125, df=3, p<. 01), and the group with 11 to 20 years of experience (n=20). The ranking of the remaining 24 variables did not result in significant differences among the teachers with differing levels of experience. These results indicate that the group of teachers with 2 to 5 years of experience was not significantly different from all other groups with varying degrees of experience in regard to ranking the variables. Therefore, the group of teachers with 2 to 5 years of experience can be considered established teachers.

For the purpose of comparing a group of Alberta teachers to Oklahoma teachers, only established teachers were selected from the latter group. A comparison of the means and standard deviations for all 25 variables in Edwards' (1983) study with those in this study, reveals strikingly similar results. Although 16 years have passed and the subjects from the two studies were in separate countries, minimal differences were reported in the statistics of both researchers. A series of t-tests for independent samples were employed to examine the differences in ranking the 25 characteristics between the

subject sample from the Oklahoma study and the participants in the Edmonton study. The number of participants from Oklahoma was 28, and for the Edmonton study the total sample was 71. The results were analyzed at a significance level of $p < .01$.

Only three variables -- J, "attends professional meetings, workshops etc."; S, "develops and maintains rapport with students"; and X, "provides a positive learning environment"-- showed significant differences between groups.

For variable J, "attends professional meetings, workshops," the mean for the Oklahoma study was 18.9, and the standard of deviation was 5.6. In the Alberta study, the mean for this variable was 21.96 and the standard of deviation was 3.2 ($t=-2.72151$, $df=97$, $p<.01$). The results for this comparison show that the Oklahoma teachers ranked this variable significantly higher than the Alberta teachers did, therefore, giving this characteristic a higher priority overall.

For variable S, "develops and maintains rapport with students," the mean for the Oklahoma study was 13.3, and the standard of deviation was 6.2. In the Alberta study the mean for this variable was 9.1, and the standard of deviation was 5.1 ($t=3.1847$, $df=97$, $p<.01$). The results of this comparison reveal that the Alberta teachers ranked this characteristic significantly higher than their American counterparts did.

For variable X, "provides a positive learning environment," the mean for the Oklahoma study was 9.4, and the standard of deviation was 5.7. In the Alberta study the mean for this variable was 5.2, and the standard of deviation was 4.8 ($t=3.4467$, $df=97$, $p<.01$). The results for this characteristic were the same as for characteristic S,

with the Alberta teachers ranking this variable significantly higher than the teachers from the Oklahoma study did.

## Discussion of Results

A major emphasis of this study was to examine which characteristics were considered most and least important for success as a physical educator among female teachers of varying ages with variable years of experience. Furthermore, the researcher was interested in discovering whether there were any differences between the subjects who participated in Edwards' study in 1983 in the United States and the current subject sample of a Canadian, female-only population in 1999.

Interestingly, despite a 16-year time difference in the replication of Edwards' (1983) study and the fact that her study had a mixed sample of male and female teachers, three of the top five characteristics in both studies were identical. Even more interesting was the fact that among the lowest-ranked characteristics, the established teachers in the Oklahoma study and the all-female subject sample in the Edmonton study shared the same four choices.

Among the similarities between the two samples were characteristics A, T, and X. The personal characteristic of A, "exhibits enthusiasm" proves that all teachers, despite their gender, age, or years of experience, believe that modeling an enthusiastic demeanor when instructing physical education classes has been, and continues to be, a very important part of being a successful physical educator.

From the researcher's perspective, it was encouraging to find that both groups of teachers felt that the human-relations characteristic, T, "helps students build self-

awareness and positive self-concept," is important and desirable for success as a physical educator. During the past few decades there has been a continuing emphasis on increasing the personal self-worth of every student. In order to contribute positively to today's society, students must acquire and maintain a sense of individual worth and become reflective, productive citizens.

The management characteristic, X, "provides a positive learning environment," was the third characteristic that was ranked in the top five by both groups of established teachers in the American and Alberta studies. The importance of establishing an environment either in the gymnasium or outdoors that is conducive to learning has proved to be of vital importance to all successful physical educators (Ennis & Cothran, 1997). It has continued to be a priority for all physical education teachers, as was indicated by the percentage of teachers from the Alberta study. Sixty-seven percent of the respondents, who chose this characteristic, ranked it as one of the top five characteristics out of all 25. This characteristic was ranked in the top five in the Alberta study by more teachers than any other characteristic. In the Oklahoma study, "providing a positive learning environment," was the fifth most popular choice of all characteristics, and although 16 years has elapsed between studies, it is obvious that teachers are very conscious of providing their students with the best possible opportunity for learning and acquiring skills.

On the other end of the importance continuum were those characteristics deemed lower in importance to the success of a physical educator. Interestingly, four of the 25 characteristics were placed in the bottom five positions in both the Oklahoma and

Alberta studies. Those characteristics deemed to be least important clearly showed more agreement among the groups than those considered being most important to the success of a physical education teacher. Those characteristics which were ranked lowest by all respondents included characteristics B, J, N, and Y.

Characteristic J, "attends professional meetings, workshops, etc.," was overwhelmingly chosen as the least important of all characteristics ranked. Not a single respondent out of the possible 71 ranked this characteristic in the top five, whereas an astounding 76.1% of the respondents selected this characteristic as a bottom-five choice. These findings are similar to those in Edwards' (1983) study, where established teachers ranked this characteristic 23rd out of 25 positions. An explanation for this perceived lack of importance of attending professional meetings and workshops may be the feeling that little value is gained from attending such events. There may also be a feeling that not much new information can be learned by the teacher to increase his/her current success as a practicing physical educator. Many physical educators have a preconceived idea of the type of teacher that they are, and are unwilling to try new and innovative ways of instruction and assessment if they currently use methods that work. A final explanation reflects the view that when the teacher is away from his/her class, learning time is reduced. Unless the workshops or meetings offer substantial professional growth for the teacher, the reduction in learning time may not be an equitable exchange.

Many factors potentially appear to contribute to the minimal importance placed on variable N, "utilizes valid testing techniques based on identified objectives." Over

half of the 71 respondents in the Alberta study, 52.1%, ranked this characteristic as one of their bottom-five choices. This statistic again validates Edwards' (1983) study, in which the established teachers ranked this variable 24th overall. Dependent on the actual situation involved, coeducational classes, the class size, whether the course is optional or required, a reduced emphasis on the necessity of testing in physical education, skill-testing devices that are outdated or unrealistic, or an increased emphasis on physical education being recreational may explain the low value placed on this characteristic. The actual wording of this characteristic may also be a factor that resulted in such a low ranking. Many teachers incorporate an attitude component in their assessment of students, which in many cases is very subjective. Additionally, many skills and fitness tests that are used are based on criterion-referenced standards, which may be thought of by some teachers as not being a very valid testing technique (Matanin & Tannehill, 1994).

Considering the teaching style utilized by most teachers, the results on characteristic B, "establishes a democratic, nonauthoritarian environment", should not be too surprising. In Edwards' (1983) study, the established teachers ranked it 25th whereas in the Alberta study, 52.1% of the respondents placed this characteristic in the 21st to 25th position. It is quite likely that the teachers saw themselves in a position of authority and having knowledge that must be directly taught to their learners. The success of a physical educator appears to be independent from having a democratic environment. Physical education teachers are responsible for the learning in their classrooms, and this is frequently equated with the need to run the class in a way that

total control of the environment is maintained. This belief is prevalent in much of the instruction of physical education at the kindergarten to Grade 9 levels, because many of the foundational concepts about psychomotor skills are not fully understood by the youthful learner. Unfortunately, this lack of "respect" for the needs of younger learners results in students developing negative feelings towards the subject of physical education. Students who perceive an environment as competitive and one in which they have had little or no input creating, rarely feel motivated and may at times regress in their desire to put forth a genuine effort (Mitchell & Chandler, 1993). Teachers must remember that all students enjoy learning and participating much more readily when they feel that they have a say in their own learning outcomes (Dweck, 1975).

Characteristic Y, "efficiently handles nonteaching activities, such as attendance, game preparation, etc.," was ranked by 47.9% of the Edmonton respondents as a bottom-five choice. A similar ranking was given in the Oklahoma study, in which the established teachers ranked the characteristic 22$^{nd}$ out of 25. Both groups placed little or no importance on the characteristic, which suggests that this ability may not have been viewed as a "teaching" skill, but rather as an expected task to be completed in order for teaching to take place. Teachers who are organized and efficient do not consciously concern themselves with this characteristic because all nonteaching activities are done smoothly without any disruption to students' learning. As teachers gain experience, this variable becomes part of the daily routine, and more often than not, a teacher's success will not be a direct result of prioritizing this characteristic.

**Significant Differences Between the Oklahoma and Alberta Studies**

From the statistical analysis of the means between the various characteristics that were ranked in the two studies, a significant difference was found in only 3 of the 25 characteristics. There were significant differences between characteristics J, S, and X.

For characteristic J, "attends professional meetings, workshops, etc.," the mean for this variable in the Oklahoma study was 18.9, whereas in the Alberta study the mean was 21.96. As a result, the findings may be interpreted to mean that the teachers from the Oklahoma study found this variable to be of higher importance than the teachers in the Alberta study did. The rationale behind this may stem from the fact that professional development conferences relating to physical education in the United States are often funded by major sponsors, and the speakers or clinicians who are brought in to educate and instruct are often highly recognized professionals with a respected history. The amount of money allocated to professional development conferences and to athletics in general is unquestionably higher than the funding provided for physical education instructors in Alberta. The fact that athletics has such a high profile in U.S. schools may be a factor in why professional educators from the Oklahoma study ranked this variable higher than their Canadian colleagues did.

Characteristic S, "develops and maintains rapport with students," had a mean of 13.3 in the Oklahoma study and 9.1 in the Alberta study. These numbers indicate that the Alberta teachers ranked this characteristic higher than the teachers from Oklahoma did. The explanation for this finding may be difficult to state accurately. When

analyzing all of the characteristics within the "human relations" category (characteristics P, Q, R, S, and T), the means for characteristics P and S are the only two that had a higher mean ranking for the Alberta teachers than for the Oklahoma teachers. It was the researcher's initial belief that most, if not all, of these characteristics would be higher ranked by the Alberta teachers because the entire study sample was female. It was hypothesized that because females are traditionally seen as more nurturing and affectionate than males, all of these characteristics should have significantly higher rankings because the Oklahoma study included both males and females. This statement cannot be validated because the male and female subjects in the Oklahoma study ranked half of the characteristics higher. It is a safe assumption to say that developing and maintaining a rapport with students is more important to the Alberta teachers than to the Oklahoma teachers.

The final significant difference in means was shown for characteristic X, "provides a positive learning environment." The mean for the Edmonton study was 5.2 and for the Oklahoma study, 9.4. These results indicate that the Edmonton teachers ranked this characteristic higher and, therefore, may work harder in planning to provide a more effective and positive learning environment for their students.

Interestingly, only 3 characteristics out of the 25 showed significant differences. The researcher had hypothesized that more characteristics would have shown greater differences in their rankings between the two studies due to the fact that the Oklahoma study was conducted 16 years earlier and had a subject sample of both male and female respondents. It was thought that a female-only subject sample would rank higher more

of the personal and human relation characteristics because females have been perceived in society as more traditionally nurturing and caring (Megyeri, 1996). Additionally, with the passing of 16 years, it was thought that some of the characteristics may have changed in meaning or interpretation; however, conducting various statistical analyses has shown that little has changed with regards to the attitudes and perceptions of teachers in how they rank these characteristics. The success of a physical educator has been shown not to change very dramatically over time; nor has a female-only subject sample shown any major differences in how the various characteristics are ranked.

If the attitudes of physical educators change only minimally over time, then the teacher preparation programs and specifically, physical education methodology courses, need to be modified. If true change is to occur in preservice teachers, then the exposure to all facets of instructing physical education needs to be extended throughout the full program of the undergraduates' university careers. Preservice teachers need quality exposure to instructional practices in every year of their undergraduate programs. In addition, new teachers of the subject need to be encouraged to continually attend professional development conferences and workshops which focus on key factors that increases the success of teachers, along with continually being made aware of the research that outlines what students' perceptions are about the subject of physical education.

It is hoped that the teachers who are graduating from post-secondary institutions and have been educated in the area of physical education are enthusiastic and dedicated, and are willing to help students build self-awareness while providing a safe, positive,

and caring learning environment. These are some of the key characteristics of a successful physical educator as outlined by the results of both Edwards' (1983) study and Chorney's (1999) study. However, although the teachers who have taken part in this study have ranked these characteristics the way that they have, it cannot be definitively stated that their teaching represents their beliefs. If a teacher's attitude is to change over the course of their career, they need to be continually exposed to research in their subject area and take personal responsibility to question students' about their concerns regarding physical education. Upon reflecting on these concerns, physical educators must act on these concerns by making the necessary changes to their programs in order to alleviate the concerns that their students may legitimately possess.

# Chapter 6 CONCLUSION

This chapter contains a summary of the study; the findings derived from the analyses of the data, conclusions, and recommendations for future researchers in this subject area.

## Summary

The purpose of this study was to investigate a female subject sample to determine if female physical educators perceive predetermined characteristics of successful teaching in physical education differently than a mixed gender group. The participants in the study were female physical education teachers from the Edmonton Public Schools in Edmonton, Alberta, Canada, who taught grades 7-12. This group was comparable in their educational background, as all candidates had an education degree with a teaching major or minor in the area of physical education. The total sample was (n=96), of which 71 responded.

The participants ranked, in an order from most important to least important, 25 statements describing qualities or competencies required of a physical education teacher. The statements were determined to be representative of five subscales denoting general behaviours or qualities necessary for a successful physical educator.

This study was a replication of the one that was conducted by Dr. Linda Edwards from the University of Utah in 1983. Her study was designed to examine the differences in the perceived importance of the 25 predetermined characteristics associated with successful teaching in the subject of physical education. Edwards'

study focussed on five specific groups of people representing both genders and who were at various stages of the education/teaching experience continuum.

This study answered three specific questions:

1. How do female physical educators rank 25 predetermined characteristics of successful physical education instruction?
2. How does the rank order of predetermined characteristics from a female subject sample differ from previous research using a mixed sample?
3. Which characteristics are considered most and least important to female physical education instructors?

## Findings

The data collected in this study were analyzed and yielded the following findings:

1. The correlation between age variable and the teaching experience variable was significant ($R=.7$, $p<.01$) value. It indicated a strong relationship between the two variables. Therefore, only teaching experience was used to conduct one way analyses of variance on the 25 variables that were to be ranked.
2. There was only one significant difference out of the 25 variables among the various groups of teaching experience. Only variable **H**, "**Exhibits professional demeanor**" resulted in a significant difference $F=4.125$, $df=3$, $p<.01$. The post hoc test showed that the group of teachers with 2 to 5 years of experience ranked

the variable H significantly different from the group with 11 to 20 years of experience.

3. The five highest ranked characteristics among all teachers in the study were characteristic **X**, "**Provides a positive learning environment,**" characteristic **A**, "**Exhibits enthusiasm,**" characteristic **E**, "**Shows dedication to teaching physical education,**" characteristic **T**, "**Helps students build self-awareness and positive self-concept,**" and characteristic **W**, "**Demonstrates a concern for students' safety.**"
4. The five lowest ranked characteristics among all teachers in the study were characteristic **J**, "**Attends professional meetings and workshops,**" characteristic **G**, "**Maintains a positive relationship with faculty and staff,**" characteristic **N**, "**Utilizes valid testing techniques based on identified objectives,**" characteristic **B**, "**Establishes a democratic, nonauthoritarian environment,**" and characteristic **Y**, "**Efficiently handles nonteaching activities, such as roll taking, game preparation, etc**."
5. There was a significant difference between the established teachers in Edwards' study and the established teachers in this study for three separate characteristics. Characteristic **J**, "**Attends professional meetings, workshops,**" characteristic **S**, "**Develops and maintains rapport with students,**" and finally characteristic **X**, "**Provides a positive learning environment,**" ($p<.01$).
6. There were three characteristics that were ranked in the top five in both the Edwards' American study and the authors Alberta study. Among the similarities

were characteristics **A**, "**Exhibits enthusiasm,**" **T**, "**Helps students build self-awareness and positive self-concept,**" and characteristic **X**, "**Provides a positive learning environment.**"

7. There were four characteristics ranked in the bottom five choices of both studies. Those characteristics, which were ranked lowest by all respondents, included characteristics **B**, "**Establishes a democratic, nonauthoritarian environment,**" **J**, "**Attends professional meetings, workshops, etc.,**" **N**, "**Utilizes valid testing techniques based on identified objectives,**" and **Y**, "**Efficiently handles nonteaching activities, such as attendance, game preparation, etc.**"

## Conclusions

Based upon the findings and limitations of this study, the following conclusions seem warranted:

1. Age does not have a significant importance in how female physical educators prepare for and carry out their teaching of the subject of physical education.
2. Teaching experience and the attitudes possessed by female physical educators do not appear to change significantly over the course of a career.
3. Physical education teachers with at least two years of inservice time can be considered "experienced", as only one variable in this study resulted in a significant difference among the various groups of teaching experience.
4. Gender does not appear to play a significant role in the instruction of physical education. Only three characteristics out of the twenty-five resulted in significant

differences between the mixed gender sample of Edwards' study and the all female sample of this study.

5. Physical educators agree on the main characteristics for having success in physical education instruction. Those characteristics include exhibiting enthusiasm, helping students build self-awareness and positive self-concept, and providing a positive learning environment.
6. Those characteristics deemed least important by physical educators in their overall success as a teacher include attending professional meetings, workshops, etc., utilizing valid testing techniques based on identified objectives, establishing a democratic, nonauthoritarian environment, and efficiently handling nonteaching activities, such as attendance, game preparation, etc.

## Recommendations

The following areas for further research are suggested:

1. The repetition of this study utilizing another female only subject sample to validate the findings of this study.
2. The repetition of this study utilizing both male and female subject samples to investigate whether gender has significant influence on the attitudes of teachers towards the subject of physical education.
3. Further development of the instrument in terms of accurate wording and better assignment of the variables to the subscales for interpretation.
4. Adding a qualitative component to the analysis section. Conducting in-depth interviews with subjects in an attempt to gain further understanding and insight into why various characteristics were ranked higher than others were.

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## Appendix A: Characteristics by Subscale Division

Characteristics by Subscale Divisions

| Characteristics | Subscale Divisions |
|---|---|
| **Personal** | A. Exhibits enthusiasm<br>B. Establishes a democratic, nonauthoritarian environment<br>C. Has a good sense of humour<br>D. Demonstrates a good relationships with children |
| **Professional** | E. Show dedication to teaching physical education<br>F. Has knowledge in all aspects of physical education subject matter<br>G. Maintains a positive relationship with faculty and staff<br>H. Exhibits professional demeanor<br>I. Aids in the development of students' physical skills and abilities |
| **Instructional** | J. Attends professional meetings, workshops<br>K. Exhibits ability to adapt to changing situations appropriately<br>L. Organizes time, resources, and materials for effective instruction<br>M. Implements a variety of instructional strategies to motivate students<br>N. Utilizes valid testing techniques based on identified objectives<br>O. Incorporates student ideas and points of view |
| **Human Relations** | P. Provides positive reinforcement to students<br>Q. Reacts with sensitivity to needs and feelings of others<br>R. Interacts and communicates effectively with parents and staff<br>S. Develops and maintains rapport with students<br>T. Helps students build self-awareness |

| | |
|---|---|
| **Management** | U. Maintains class discipline<br>V. Treats students firmly and fairly<br>W. Demonstrates a concern for students' safety<br>X. Provides a positive learning environment<br>Y. Efficiently handles nonteaching activities such as roll taking, game preparation, etc. |

## Appendix B: Qualities-Competencies Required of Physical Educators

Qualities-Competencies Required
Of Physical Educators

1. Please check the appropriate information:

Age 21-25 _____

26-35 _____

36-45 _____

46 or over _____

Years that you have taught Physical Education

First _____

2-5 _____

6-10 _____

11-20 _____

21 or more _____

2. After you have completed the card sort, place the letters of the cards in the blanks below, in the same order as you have them ranked.

**MOST IMPORTANT**

_____
_____
_____
_____
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_____
_____

**LEAST IMPORTANT**

_____

(Your name, please print)

## Appendix C: Consent Form and Participation Letter

University of Alberta
Research Consent Form

I, _____ hereby consent to be
(Print name)

- Surveyed
- Interviewed

By _____.
(Print researcher's name)

I understand that:

- I may withdraw from the research aspect of the study at any time without penalty.
- All information gathered will be treated confidentially and discussed only with the research supervisor.
- Any information that identifies me will be destroyed upon completion of this research
- I will not be identifiable in any documents resulting from this research.

I also understand that the results of this research will be used only in the following:

- Research thesis
- Presentations and written articles for other educators

Address of Participant: _____

Phone number that can be used to contact: _____

School name: _____

_____ _____
Signature of participant Date signed

For further information concerning the completion of the form, please contact (Mr. David Chorney, Department of Secondary Education, Room 341, phone 492-3674, 492-5515 (office numbers) or 439-7146 (home).

September, 1999

Hello, my name is David Chorney and I am a graduate student in the Department of Secondary Education at the University of Alberta. My research project will investigate female physical educator's attitudes towards physical education. I am interested in your responses to a data collection instrument that requires you to rank order 25 statements.

The exclusive female perspective regarding attitudes towards physical education has not been previously studied. Studies have been carried out with combined male and female subject groups and male only sample groups, but little to no information has been published as to what female physical educators believe to be important in teaching physical education. Considering thirty per cent of all physical educators are female, this practice appears inequitable. The study that I am replicating was conducted in the early 1980's in the U.S. and it is my intent to conduct a similar study with a female only subject sample that is Canadian.

**My study will attempt to answer certain questions**:

1. How do female physical educators rank 25 predetermined characteristics of successful physical education instruction?
2. How does the ranking order of predetermined characteristics from a female subject sample differ from previous research using a mixed sample?
3. What characteristics are considered most and least important to female physical education instructors?

My intent is to study the responses of female physical educators from Edmonton Public Schools. The instrument that I have selected to collect my data contains 25 statements describing qualities or competencies required of a successful physical educator. The statements have been determined to be representative of 5 subscales denoting general behaviors and qualities necessary for a physical educator to experience success. Your only responsibility in helping me with this study is to be honest and serious as you rank 25 statements in an order of most important to least important according to your beliefs.

If you choose to participate I assure you that total anonymity will be provided and that you have the option of not participating or opting out at any time. If you choose to participate and voluntarily provide your name I

may ask you to have an interview with me once I have received all of the survey forms. This will allow me to analyze your responses with greater detail and clarity.

I will be using your responses to write my thesis on this important subject. It is my intent to express the female perspective and discover if females perceive teaching physical education differently than their male colleagues in both Canada and the United States.

Please consider participating in this research project so the voice of female physical educators can be heard and if analysis supports the need to make changes in teacher preparation, recommendations can be formulated. I look forward to working with you and perhaps meeting you on a more personal level at the conclusion of this study.

Sincerely,

David W. Chorney

## Appendix D: Survey Instructions Page and Characteristics

On the following page you will find 25 statements describing qualities or competencies required of a physical education teacher. Each of these items has been previously established as important. I am interested in determining which you feel are most important to being a successful physical educator and which you feel are least important. To help you, I've devised an exercise outlined below:

1. Separate all 25 cards.
2. Read each statement and set the cards so that the most important characteristic is on top, then the next most important and so on. Some people will divide the cards into high, medium and low stacks and then further divide them until you end up with cards from highest to lowest.
3. Once they are in order, note that each card has a letter. Record each letter in the 25 blanks provided on the back page and return that page. You may keep the cards.

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **A**<br>Exhibits enthusiasm | **B**<br>Establishes a democratic, non-authoritarian environment | **C**<br>Has a good sense of humour | **D**<br>Demonstrates a good relationship with children | **E**<br>Shows dedication to teaching physical education | **F**<br>Has knowledge in all aspects of physical education subject matter |
| **G**<br>Maintains a positive relationship with faculty and staff | **H**<br>Exhibits professional demeanour (dress, conduct, attitudes, etc.) | **I**<br>Aids in the development of students' physical skills and abilities | **J**<br>Attends professional meetings, workshops, etc. | **K**<br>Exhibits ability to adapt to changing situation(s) appropriately | **L**<br>Organizes time, resources, and materials for effective instruction |
| **M**<br>Implements a variety of instructional strategies to motivate students | **N**<br>Utilizes valid testing techniques based on identified objectives | **O**<br>Incorporates student ideas and points of view | **P**<br>Provides positive reinforcement to students | **Q**<br>Reacts with sensitivity to the needs and feelings of others | **R**<br>Interacts and communicates effectively with parents and staff |
| **S**<br>Develops and maintains rapport with students | **T**<br>Helps students build self-awareness and positive self-concept | **U**<br>Maintains class discipline | **V**<br>Treats students firmly and fairly | **W**<br>Demonstrates a concern for students' safety | **X**<br>Provides a positive learning environment |
| **Y**<br>Efficiently handles non-teaching activities, such as attendance, game preparation, etc. | | | | | |